

**Election Commission
Meeting Minutes
April 8, 2014**

Present: Marjorie Butler, Nancy Levine, John McDermott, Jan Huffman

Also Present: City Clerk David Olson, Asst. City Clerk Eneida Tavares, Alderman John Rice

Minutes

The minutes from the November January 28, 2014 meeting were reviewed. There were no changes and the **minutes were approved unanimously.**

Discussion of New Polling Locations to Move Out of the Elementary Schools.

Ald. John Rice joined the Commission for the discussion of the Waban Branch Library as a polling location for Wards 5-3 and 5-4 which are currently housed in the Zervas School. City Clerk David Olson informed the Commission that the Clerk's Office has been working on finding new polling locations to replace both the Zervas School and the Cabot School which are slated to be closed and renovated over the next few years. Ald. Rice proposed the use the Waban Library as a replacement for the Zervas School. He noted that the building, to be useable as both a polling and meeting location, needs to have a handicap ramp installed and the parking lot paved. Undertaking these improvements have been discussed for several years, but have not come to fruition. Recently the space has been looked at again as the Waban Neighborhood Area Council and the Angier School Building Committee need a place to hold community meetings. Money has been secured from the Waban Improvement Society and the Zervas PTO to install a temporary handicap ramp. Ald. Rice noted that Public Building Commissioner Josh Morse has been consulted and will work to make sure that the ramp is installed correctly and integrated into the building. He is also looking at getting electric door openers installed on the front door. The Department of Public Works will pave the parking lot and integrate new asphalt sidewalks to make sure that the site is handicap accessible. Ald. Rice has spoken with the handicap accessibility coordinator and no other improvements will need to be made to use it as a polling place.

Clerk Olson noted that it is the Board of Aldermen that will need to vote to move the polling location. The Election Commission should review the plan and take a vote to make a recommendation on the change. He and Assistant Clerk Tavares have visited the site and noted that it was nicely designed with two wings that will accommodate the two polling locations. The Director of the Library was enthusiastic about having polling

at the Library. Commissioner Butler noted that the site seemed to be more central for the precincts than the Zervas School is now.

It was noted that if the Commissioners wanted to move forward with this proposal and the Board of Aldermen approved it, a mailing would need to go out to the residents of the precincts letting them know of the change of location. Additional signage will also need to be placed at Zervas on Election Day to help guide individuals to the new location.

Clerk Olson asked the Commissioners to make their approval contingent on the accessibility work being completed by August 1, 2014 so that the proper notifications can be sent to residents in time for the State Primary Election on September 9, 2014. Ald. Huffman asked about lighting in the evenings. Clerk Olson noted that he had not been to the site after dark. Ald. Rice felt that there was adequate lighting, but would confirm that with Public Building Commissioner Josh Morse. A question arose about the type of ramp to be installed. Ald. Rice noted that the ramp will be purchased as soon as the Election Commission and the Board of Aldermen approve the location. It will be a temporary metal ramp that will be installed permanently in that it will be securely attached to the building and left in place. Commissioner Levine made the motion to move the polling locations from the Zervas School to the Waban Branch Library contingent upon the handicap accessibility issues being completed by August 1, 2014. The motion was approved unanimously.

The discussion turned to the process that the Clerk's Office is using as it continues to evaluate alternative locations to move polling out of the elementary schools. Asst. Clerk Tavares presented a spreadsheet that was being used to rate various alternative locations for the Cabot School. Clerk Olson noted that the sheet presented a weighted score for each location based on a number of criteria that had been suggested by the Election Advisory Committee and the Commissioners and had been refined by the Clerk's staff. The spreadsheet looks at availability, handicap access, parking, walkability, visibility, public safety, bathroom access, HVAC and exclusive use. Availability and Handicap Access are yes or no criteria, if the site is not available or handicap accessible it will not be considered. The other criteria are weighted to give more weight to parking and less weight to exclusive use. Clerk Olson asked if the Commissioners were comfortable with the criteria and the weightings for each criteria. Commissioner Huff felt that cost should also be a criteria which Clerk Olson stated that he would include.

Asst. Clerk Tavares noted that she had spoken with Cabot Park Village and they were enthusiastic about being a location to replace Cabot School. It was asked about whether the Newton Senior Center could hold two precincts. Concern was expressed

about the amount of space available and the ability to hold two precincts there. Newton North High School was also suggested, but concern was raised about parking and about the difficulty in finding the gym where the polling location will be held. The New Art Center will be looked at as a location, but there is concern for parking. The Carroll Center was mentioned but parking was also a concern there. Also the Sacred Heart School was mentioned, but it is a school and does not solve the problem of moving out of elementary schools. The Clerk's will continue to work on finding locations.

Changes to the payment schedule for the Election Commissioners

The Election Commissioners are currently paid on a weekly basis and Clerk Olson offered the suggestion of moving to a monthly payment schedule. He also encourage the Commissioners take advantage of direct deposit, to eliminate the need for checks to be issued and for e-mail notification of deposit so that payroll vouchers would not need to be printed. A motion to move to a monthly payroll was made and seconded and approved unanimously.

Legislation Update

Clerk Olson noted that there has not been any real movement on this legislation. As had been reported in January, a Joint House and Senate Committee has been formed to work out a bill that reconciles the House and Senate versions. The Committee includes Senators Hedlund, Finegold and DiDomenico and Representatives Murphy, Moran and Dooley and was to have met on Thursday, April 3, but no report has come out of that meeting at this time. Commissioner Huffman asked if the proposed changes would have an impact on the city budget. Clerk Olson responded that it would have an impact if the early voting proposal that requires actual polling locations be set up to accommodate early voting be implemented. Commissioner Huffman asked about same day voter registration. Clerk Olson noted that from the literature that he has seen from other State's, it will not significantly increase voter turnout. It will take time at the polls to get someone registered, perhaps creating a need to have another poll worker at the polls. He suggested that the Commissioners wait and see what the actual bill will include and then get in touch with our representatives to let them know what the Newton Election Commission supports or not. We could also ask them to advocate for any changes that the Commission would like to see. The staff will keep an eye on the process and will let the Commissioners know when something is happening.

The Passing of Ald. Salvucci

Ald. Salvucci had served as a Ward Aldermen from Ward 3 since 1988. With the vacancy created by his passing, a special election in Ward 3 to fill the seat will need to be

undertaken. Asst. Clerk Tavares has worked up three scenarios for potential dates for the election and presented that information so that the Election Commissioners could recommend to the Board of Aldermen a date for the Special Election. The three dates looked at were the last Tuesday in June, in conjunction with the State Primary elections on September 9, and in conjunction with the state general election on November 5, 2014.

Clerk Olson noted that the June 24th date will not work as the timing is too tight. By the time the item worked its way through the Board, there would only be one day between when nomination papers could become available and when they would need to be submitted to the Election Commission.

The Clerk's Office did not look at holding the election in July and August as this is summer vacation time. The next date the Clerk's Office looked at was September 9 as a dual election in conjunction with the State Primary Election. The final date looked at was November 4, 2014 as a dual election in conjunction with the State General Election, however this date falls outside of the 120-day window that the Board has to hold an election after its call.

The Commissioners discussed the September 9, 2014 date which seemed to be the most reasonable date to call the election. It is close to the limit of the 120-day timeframe for calling the election, but is the date that makes the most sense. The June date is just too tight as there are no known candidates at this point who might run.

A motion was made and seconded to recommend to the Board of Aldermen that the date of September 9, 2014 be chosen to hold a special election in conjunction with the State Primary Elections which was approved unanimously.

Update on funding for the new polling equipment

The City received reimbursement for the special primary election from the State as well as a smaller reimbursement from the vacancy created when Peter Koutoujian left office to become County Sheriff and John Lawn was elected as Representative. The salary saved while the position was vacant was divided amongst the various communities. The funds received were not earmarked for elections, but went to the general fund.

However, Chief Financial Officer Maureen Lemieux has indicated that she is willing to release some of that money for new polling equipment if we can get a request together well before the end of the fiscal year. Clerk Olson also noted that beginning in FY15 there will be a \$5,000 line item in the operating budget for capital expenditures to replace broken or damaged polling equipment. Commissioner Butler asked if the Clerk's Office had decided on what equipment would be purchased. Clerk Olson noted that it

was being worked on, but had not been decided yet. Asst. Clerk Tavares passed out a spreadsheet she had created to document the number of polling booths that each location has, the number needed and the cost for replacement depending on type to be used.

Review of Plans for the Fall Elections.

The schedule and calendar for the Fall elections were distributed to the Commissioners. Clerk Olson noted that the office has already started the process with the certification of nomination papers already taking place in the office. We will be undertaking a training session for all of the Poll Workers on August 26, 2014 in the Druker Auditorium at the Library.

Other Business:

An Update on the Middlesex City and Town Clerks Association Meeting

Susan Ahearn and Asst. Clerk Eneida Tavares attended the Spring meeting of the association where Attorney Michelle Tassanari, of the legal department at the Secretary of the Commonwealth's Office presented a program on UOCAVA (Uniformed and Overseas Citizens Absentee Voting Act) ballots and voting. UOCAVA voters are Massachusetts residents who are living abroad and voting absentee. UOCAVA ballots must be e-mailed to those requesting them at least 45 days before an election.

Set Date for Next Meeting

The Election Commission chose to wait and see when the items that they requested are docketed and scheduled before the Board before setting the next meeting date.

The meeting adjourned at 6:35 pm.

Submitted by

Marjorie Butler, Chair